

In Washington, tractor rollovers are the leading cause of agriculture-related deaths and accounted for five fatalities in 2010 alone.

Tractors today are safer than ever, but are still involved in many farm accidents. State law requires a seatbelt and a Rollover Protective Structure (ROPS) on all tractors operated by an employee, regardless of age, as long as the tractor was designed to accommodate a ROPS.

### **What is a Rollover Protective Structure (ROPS)?**

A Rollover Protective Structure, or ROPS, is a roll bar, frame or cab mounted to a tractor that is meant to protect the operator from injuries in the event of a vehicle rollover.

A seatbelt and rollover protection are the most important safety features on a tractor. Both are required by the regulations in Chapter 307, Safety Standards for Agriculture.

### **What is the purpose of rollover protection?**

A ROPS can absorb energy during a rollover like the crumple zone in a car. Its main purpose is to protect the operator. Seatbelt use is critical. It keeps the operator within the protected area of the ROPS. Without the seatbelt fastened, the operator could be ejected and injured or even killed.

## **Help from Labor & Industries**

The Department of Labor & Industries, Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH), provides consultations, risk management assessments, training and technical assistance at no cost to employers. Call today to schedule a confidential consultation or risk management assessment, or go to **[www.SafetyConsultants.Lni.wa.gov](http://www.SafetyConsultants.Lni.wa.gov)** for more information.

You may also call 1-800-423-7233 or visit a local L&I office and ask for the consultation manager.

*Other formats for persons with disabilities are available on request. Call 800-547-8367. TDD users, call 360-902-5797. L&I is an equal opportunity employer.*

PUBLICATION F417-234-000 [06-2012]

# **Tractor Safety: Rollover Protection and Seatbelts**



In Washington, tractor rollovers are the leading cause of agriculture-related deaths.



Washington State Department of  
**Labor & Industries**  
*Division of Occupational Safety and Health*

## What does the law require?

- Agricultural tractors manufactured after Oct. 25, 1976, must have a Rollover Protective Structure (ROPS) and a seatbelt.
- Older tractors must have a ROPS if the tractor can accommodate one. An employer may be exempt from this requirement if the manufacturer provides proof that the tractor was not designed to be fitted with a ROPS.
- There are other exemptions. For example, A ROPS is not required when low profile tractors are used in orchards, vineyards, hop yards or inside a building where the vertical clearance would substantially interfere with normal operations.
- Examples of low-profile tractors:
  - A wheel- or track-equipped vehicle where the front wheel spacing is equal to the rear wheel spacing as measured between the centerlines of the wheels.
  - Clearance from the bottom of the tractor chassis to the ground is 18 inches or less.
  - The highest point of the hood is 60 inches or less.
  - The tractor is designed so the operator straddles the transmission when seated.



## When can exemptions occur?

Tractor is...	ROPS required	ROPS not required
In a vineyard, orchard, hops field or building with no overhead clearance.		●
In an orchard early in the season with no overhead obstructions.	●	
Operating in an orchard where ROPS are not required and then travels through an open field to be returned to its shed.		●
Leaving an orchard where ROPS are not required for another orchard where ROPS are not required, and stops to mow a field.	●	
Moving from an orchard, hops field or building with no clearance to work in an open field.	●	
Mounted with corn picker, fruit harvester or other equipment that interferes with deploying a ROPS.		●
Working an orchard and leaves briefly to refuel or load a sprayer.		●

## More about safe tractor operations

### Supervisors and managers:

- Train your workers to safely operate and work around tractors.
- Ensure the training is described in a written Accident Prevention Program.
- Service tractors properly.

### Workers:

- Always use a seatbelt with a ROPS.
- Use ROPS wherever possible, even if not required.
- Start the tractor only while seated.
- Avoid driving near ditches, embankments and holes.
- Slow down when turning, crossing slopes, and on rough, slick or muddy surfaces.
- Avoid steep slopes.
- Never carry passengers unless needed for training or machine operation.
- Operate the tractor smoothly. Avoid jerky turns, starts or stops.
- Hitch implements correctly.
- Do not speed or drive faster than conditions allow.
- Keep shields and guards in place.
- Turn off the engine or Power Takeoff Drive when not in use.
- Be careful when refueling.

